

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY BANGUI

INFO AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 220936

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR,EAID,BGEN,CT,CB,KS,SF,UN

SUBJECT: CAR FOREIGN MINISTER COMMENTS ON GOCAR-FRENCH
RELATIONS

REF: STATE 214657(NOTAL)

1. DURING INFORMAL DINNER OCTOBER 6 AT RESIDENCE OF
CAR AMBASSADOR IN WASHINGTON, FONMIN JOSEPH POTOLOT, WHO
IN VERY RELAXED AND JOVIAL MOOD INFORMED AMBASSADOR
DALE AND COUNTRY OFFICER THAT PRESIDENT BOKASSA (WHO
CURRENTLY IN FRANCE) AND GISCARD D'ESTAING HAD STRAIGHTENED
OUT CAR-GOF PROBLEMS AND THAT RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO
GOVERNMENTS WERE NOW VERY HARMONIOUS.

2. IN RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS REGARDING STATUS OF
NATIONALIZATIONS OF FRENCH PROPERTIES IN BANGUI, POTOLOT
SAID THAT THINGS WOULD REMAIN AS THEY ARE AND THAT THE
GOCAR HAD NOT BACKED OFF ON THIS ISSUE. HE ADDED THAT
GOCAR-FRENCH RELATIONS WERE SO SMOOTH THAT THE-GOF HAD
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MADE GIFT TO BOKASSA OF FOUR AIRCRAFT: ONE CARAVELLE AND

AND THREE DC-3'S. HE ALSO SAID THAT AN ACCORD HAD BEEN SIGNED WHEREBY FRANCE HAD AGREED TO MAKE A MAJOR CONTRIBUTION FOR CONSTRUCTION OF A RAILROAD IN THE CAR AND TO HEAD A CONSORTIUM TO ACCOMPLISH THE UNDERTAKING. POTOLOT WOULD NOT RESPOND DIRECTLY WHEN ASKED ABOUT THE STATUS OF FRENCH MILITARY ATTACHES IN THE CAR, BUT GAVE IMPRESSION THAT SOMETHING WAS BEING WORKED OUT. HE ALSO SAID THAT GOCAR HAD COMPROMISED ON THE ISSUE OF REOPENING THE FRENCH CONSULATE IN BANGUI.

3. IN REFERRING TO CARAVELLE (PARA 2 ABOVE) THE FONMIN STRESSED THAT IT WAS A GIFT. (THIS WAS AN OBVIOUS SNIPE AT THE US DC-8 FIASCO OF 1972). HE ALSO RECALLED THE VISIT TO BANGUI IN 1972 OF THEN ASSISTANT SECRETARY DAVID NEWSOM WHICH HE SAID WAS DISAPPOINTING FOR THE CAR SINCE NOTHING (A MUCH HOPED FOR INCREASE IN US ASSISTANCE) CAME OF IT.

4. NEITHER THE FONMIN NOR AMBASSADOR BANDA-BAFIOT WAS ABLE TO PROVIDE ANY FURTHER INFORMATION TO SUBSTANTIATE POTOLOT'S ALLEGATION MADE TO ASSISTANT SECRETARY EASUM THAT THE DEPARTMENT HAD BLOCKED A GROUP OF PRIVATE AMERICANS WHO WERE PLANNING INVESTMENT IN THE CAR (PARA 3 REFTEL). THEY WERE TOLD THAT THIS WAS DIFFICULT TO BELIEVE SINCE SUCH ACTION CONFLICTS WITH US POLICY OF ENCOURAGING EXPORTS. POTOLOT LET THE MATTER DROP WITH PROCLAMATION THAT GOCAR WELCOMES US INVESTORS AND FRANCE HAS NO MONOPOLY ON CAR.

5. POTOLOT DEPARTING US ON OCTOBER 8 FOR FRANCE WHERE HE PLANS MEET WITH BOKASSA. HE ALSO PLANS MID-NOVEMBER OFFICIAL VISIT TO SAIGON. THE QUESTION OF A POSSIBLE BOKASSA VISIT TO THE US WAS NOT RPT NOT RAISED DURING COURSE OF RAMBLING CONVERSATIONS. KISSINGER

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